INTRODUCTION

*' When I read the book, tlie biography famous,
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life ?
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life ?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life !)
Why even I myself, I often think, know little or nothing of my
real life.
Only a few hints—a few diffused faint clues and indirections
I seek . . . to trace out here."

WALT WHITMAN.

FOR years I have contemplated telling this story, and for years I have put of telling it. While I have delayed, my memory has not improved, and my recollections of the past are more hazy and fragmentary" than when it first occurred to me that one day I might write them down.

My bad memory would matter less if I had some skill in writing—the practised writer can see possibilities in the most ordinary events—or if I had kept a systematic and conscientious record of my life. But although I was at one time conscientious and diligent enough in keeping a diary, I kept it for use at the moment, not for future reference. I kept it with paste-pot and scissors as much as with a pen. My method was to cut bits out of the newspapers and stick them into my diary day by day. Before the end of the year was reached Mr. Letts would have been ashamed to own his diary. It had become a bursting, groaning dustbin of information, for the most part useless. The biggest elastic band made could hardly encircle its